

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MONROV 07623 051021Z
ACTION EB-08

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 DODE-00
DOTE-00 FMC-02 INR-07 NSAE-00 CG-00 DLOS-09
OES-07 L-03 /047 W
-----090744 060559Z/12

R 050930Z NOV 77
FM AMEMBASSY MONROVIA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6912

UNCLAS MONROVIA 7623

AF/W PLEASE PASS AMB. CARTER

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: EEW, LI
SUBJECT: PRESIDENT TOLBERT DEFENDS LIBERIA'S MERCHANT MARINE POLICY

1. AT A DINNER GIVEN IN HIS HONOR (NOV. 1) ON THE OCCASION OF A VISIT TO LIBERIA OF EXECUTIVES OF THE LIBERIAN SHIPPING COUNCIL, LTD. AND THE FEDERAL OF AMERICAN CONTROLLED SHIPPING, PRESIDENT TOLBERT DELCARED THAT IN LINE WITH ITS BASIC PHILOSOPHY OF FREE TRADE LIBERIA HAS CONSISTENTLY STOOD AGAINST CARGO PREFERENCE AND HONORED ITS AGREEMENTS AND TREATIES. REFERRING TO PROTECTIONIST GROUPS CHALLENGING LIBERIA'S DETERMINATION TO HONOR ITS COMMITMENTS AND DEFEND ITS PHILOSOPHY, THE PRESIDENT CATEGORICALLY STATED THAT LIBERIA HAS SUPPORTED AND WILL CONTINUE TO SUPPORT THE POLICY OF THE U.S. DEPT OF DEFENSE TO CONTROL AMERICAN-OWNED SHIPPING. HE EMPHASIZED LIBERIA'S WILLINGNESS TO COOPERATE WITH THE U.S. GOVERNMENT IN ANY WAY, "BE IT BY EXECUTIVE AGREEMENT, TREATY OR OTHERWISE, TO REINFORCE LIBERIA'S COMMITMENT TO MAKING AVAILABLE AMRRICAN-OWNED SHIPS UNDER THE LIBERIAN FLAG TO THE U.S. GOVERNMENT IN A NATIONAL EMERGENCY".

THE PRESIDENT POINTED OUT THAT CARGO PREFERENCE LEGISLATION RECENTLY ADVOCATED BY CERTAIN SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS IS CONTRARY TO THE TERMS OF LIBERIA'S TREATY OF FRIENDSHIP, COMMERCE AND

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NAVIGATION WHTH THE UNITED STATES. HE EXPRESSED GRATIFICATION THAT THE "UNFAIR TACTICS" OF THESE INTERESTS DID NOT PREVAIL AND THE PROPOSED LEGISLATION FAILED TO PASS.

PRESIDENT TOLBERT TOOK PRIDE IN THE FACT THAT LIBERIA'S MARITIME PRACTICE AND SAFETY STANDARDS REQUIRED BY LIBERIAN MARITIME LAW ARE NOT ONLY IN EXCESS OF ACCEPTED INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS BUT

ALSO RANK AMONG THE VERY HIGHEST. HE REFERRED TO LIBERIA'S ROLE IN FORMULATING AND IN OBTAINING THE ADOPTION OF AN INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION ON MINIMUM STANDARDS IN MERCHANT SHIPS AT A RECENT MARITIME CONFERENCE OF THE INTERNATIONAL LABOR ORGANIZATION. PRESIDENT TOLBERT ASSURED THE AUDIENCE THAT LIBERIA WILL CONTINUE ITS OPEN DOOR ECONOMIC POLICY ESPECIALLY AS IT APPLIES TO INTERNATIONAL MERCHANT SHIPPING AND CONTINUE TO SUPPORT THE MOST EFFICIENT AND PROFESSIONAL MARITIME ADMINISTRATION OF ITS MERCHANT FLEET. LIBERIA WILL ALSO SUPPORT, ACCORDING TO THE PRESIDENT, THE HIGHEST MERCHANT MARINE SAFETY STANDARDS ACCEPTABLE TO THE INTERNATIONAL MARITIME COMMUNITY. THE PRESIDENT WARNED THAT LIBERIA WILL DEFEND ITS MARITIME INTEREST AGAINST UNLAWFUL AND DISCRIMINATORY ATTACKS ON ITS MERCHANT SHIPPING PROGRAM WITH EVERY LEGITIMATE AND APPROPRIATE MEANS AT ITS DISPOSAL. HE CALLED ON HIS FRIENDS TO "BECOME TOTALLY INVOLVED" IN TRANSFORMING LIBERIA'S IMAGE FROM A SO-CALLED "FLAG OF CONVENIENCE" TO A FLAG OF "GENUINE FRIENDSHIP, COOPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT AMONG ALL NATIONS."

2. COMPLETE TEXT OF SPEECH IS BEING TRANSMITTED BY AIRGRAM.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MARINE TRANSPORTATION, POLICIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 05-Nov-1977 12:00:00 am
Decapton Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decapton Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977MONROV07623
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770409-1111
Format: TEL
From: MONROVIA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19771192/aaaadbbo.tel
Line Count: 83
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: e0879521-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EB
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 07-Jan-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 705243
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PRESIDENT TOLBERT DEFENDS LIBERIA'S MERCHANT MARINE POLICY
TAGS: EEWLT, LI, (TOLBERT, WILLIAM R)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkvgwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/e0879521-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009